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AMEMBASSY TOKYO
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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 157990

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SUBJECT: DISCUSSIONS WITH AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY RE PROPOSED
- INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INDOCHINA REFUGEES

REFS: A. BANGKOK 17095; B. STATE 113713; C. CANBERRA
- 3434; D. STATE 111014 (ALL NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. SHARP INCREASES IN THE ARRIVAL OF BOAT REFUGEES DURING APRIL AND MAY COULD VITIATE THE JOINT AUSTRALIAN-US EFFORT TO CONVINCE TEMPORARY ASYLUM COUNTRIES TO DISCOURAGE BOAT REFUGEES FROM DEPARTING DIRECTLY FOR AUSTRALIA. AN AUSTRALIAN INITIATIVE TO CALL AN INTERNATIONAL PLEDGING CONFERENCE UNDER UN AUSPICES SPECIFICALLY TO DISCUSS THE INDOCHINA REFUGEE PROBLEM IS APPARENTLY BEING DISCUSSED WITHIN THE GOA. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING THE APRIL 26-27 TALKS BETWEEN GOA IMMIGRATION DEPT. FIRST ASSISTANT SECRETARY VOLKER AND U.S. OFFICIALS HERE, VOLKER UNDERSCORED THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES IF BOAT REFUGEES ARRIVED DIRECTLY IN AUSTRALIA FROM COUNTRIES OF TEMPORARY ASYLUM. IN VIEW OF THEN PREDICTED BOAT REFUGEE FLOWS OF 1500-1600 A MONTH, AND THE EXPECTED ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF A NEW 25,000 PAROLE, WE ANTICIPATED THAT RESETTLEMENT OF

BOAT REFUGEES BY THE U.S., AUSTRALIA, AND OTHER COUNTRIES WOULD EVENTUALLY TAKE ALL BOAT CASE REFUGEES, THEREBY ENABLING THE GOA AND OURSELVES TO PERSUADE TEMPORARY ASYLUM COUNTRIES LIKE MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA TO DISCOURAGE REFUGEES FROM LEAVING TEMPORARY CAMPS FOR AUSTRALIA. THEREFORE, WE AGREED TO A NUMBER OF MEASURES DESIGNED TO BRING ABOUT THAT END (REF. D).

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3. THE HIGHER BOAT REFUGEE ARRIVAL RATES IN APRIL AND MAY, IF CONTINUED, WILL LEAD TO THREE OR FOUR TIMES MORE BOAT REFUGEES OVER THE NEXT YEAR THAN ORIGINALLY ESTIMATED. SO IT IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE TO RESETTLE ENOUGH BOAT REFUGEES TO KEEP CAMP POPULATIONS STATIC OR DECLINING. THUS, FIRST ASYLUM COUNTRIES WILL SOON BEGIN, IF THEY HAVE NOT ALREADY DONE SO, REFUSING TO LET BOATS LAND OR SUPPLYING THEM WITH ESSENTIALS AND SENDING THEM ON THEIR WAY. THE RESULT WILL BE (A) LARGE NUMBERS OF BOATS REACHING AUSTRALIA, HONG KONG AND THE PHILIPPINES, AND (B) A REPLAY OF THE SINKINGS AND OTHER TRAGEDIES THAT CHARACTERIZED THE BOAT REFUGEE EXODUS DURING THE SPRING AND EARLY SUMMER OF 1977. IT SEEMS LIKELY, THEREFORE, THAT DESPITE THE BEST EFFORTS OF THE GOA AND THE USG THE FLOW OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES TO AUSTRALIA WILL CONTINUE, FUELING THE FIRES OF CRITICS OF THE GOA'S PRESENT GENEROUS REFUGEE POLICY.

4. THE SUDDEN INCREASE IN BOAT REFUGEE ARRIVALS AND THE PROBLEMS THIS POSES FOR USA AND GOA WERE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF FOREIGN MINISTER PEACOCK AT THE ANZUS COUNCIL MEETING. IN THE FORMAL MEETINGS, THE AUSTRALIAN

DELEGATION DID NO MORE THAN QUESTION WHEN OUR PAROLE WOULD BE OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED. HOWEVER, EA AND HA/ORM HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING THE PROBLEM WITH THE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY HERE WHICH INFORMS US THAT PEACOCK WAS MADE CLEARLY AWARE OF PROBLEM AS RESULT OF OUR INTERVENTION AT ANZUS COUNCIL. A SUGGESTION ARISING FROM THESE DISCUSSIONS WAS THE POSSIBILITY OF AN "INTERNATIONAL PLEDGING CONFERENCE" UNDER AUSPICES OF THE UN TO TRY TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF RESETTLEMENT OFFERS AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO UNHCR. WE POINTED OUT TO OUR AUSTRALIAN CONTACT THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH U.S. INITIATION OF SUCH A CONFERENCE AND SUGGESTED THAT IF THE GOA WISHED TO APPROACH SECRETARY WALDHEIM OR UNHCR HARTLING REGARDING A SPECIAL CONFERENCE ON INDOCHINESE REFUGEES THAT WE WOULD BE PRE-CONFIDENTIAL

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PARRED TO SUPPORT THEIR INITIATIVE. SUBSEQUENTLY, WE ALSO RELAYED ORM DIRECTOR LOWMAN'S REPORT THAT A UNHCR-CONVENED WORKING LEVEL CONFERENCE CENTERED ON ASEAN COUNTRIES, US AND AUSTRALIA SHOULD BE HELD FIRST TO DETERMINE WHETHER

A HIGHER LEVEL CONFERENCE WOULD BE PRODUCTIVE, AND TO PREPARE FOR IT. IN THIS CONNECTION, THE GOA MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN THE FACT THAT THE ASEAN COUNTRIES HAVE REQUESTED AN ITEM ON REFUGEES BE INCLUDED IN THE AGENDA OF THE US-ASEAN CONSULTATIONS IN AUGUST.

6. THIS MESSAGE IS SIMPLY TO BRING YOU UP TO DATE ON OUR THINKING HERE AND TO INFORM YOU OF OUR TALKS WITH THE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY. PLEASE LET THE DEPARTMENT KNOW OF ANY SUBSTANTIVE CONVERSATIONS YOU HAVE ON THIS SUBJECT WITH GOA OFFICIALS. WE ALSO INVITE YOUR COMMENTS, AND THOSE OF THE INFO ADDRESSEES, ON THE PROPOSED WORKING-LEVEL AND INTERNATIONAL PLEDGING CONFERENCES. VANCE

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